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Political Science 001

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October 17th, 2024

Inherited Implosion

"They are so bad and frankly, they're evil, they're evil. What they've done, they've weaponized, they've weaponized our elections. They've done things that nobody thought was even possible" (Lerer and Gold *Trump escalates threats to political opponents he deems the 'enemy'*). As common and repetitive the remarks spewed by the former President, Donald J. Trump, are seen and accepted as a normalcy, should be of great level of concern to the very fabric that wove and shaped our democracy protected under the Constitution of the United States of America. Registered-voter citizens of the Untied States of America voted for this man to be in office on three consecutive election cycles, they decided that he is fit to be the commander and chief of the executive office, to oversee and pull the trigger on important policies and decisions. Alongside submitting themselves as is the requirement of the government, in hopes that their elected official has their best interests in mind. My paper will briefly focus on the psychology of the individuals who allowed Donald J. Trump into power, stressing voting theories, and tracing them to see if history has in fact repeated itself or allowing itself to be written at the hands of a man who has re-written his own history. There is a quote that says, "History is written by the victor" (Churchill Winston). With this quote in mind, how can we analyze his motives? Imitations attributed to Trump's mentor Roy Cohn that made the man with no receipts for his actions. "The three rules for winning – attack, attack, attack. admit nothing, deny everything.

claim victory no matter what" (Not directly quoted as verbatim statement by Donald Trump. Highlighted in various media, biographies, and films that discuss the principles Trump adopted in his business and political strategies).

A Brief History of Populism: Parallels Between Trump, Nixon + Regan

"*And so tonight — to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans — I ask for your support*" (Nixon, Richard, Silent Majority). Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaigned curated many populist themes later revied by Donald Trump in 2016. Nixon campaigned during a time of pollical and social dishevelment. Americans were disillusioned with the political establishment. Civil Rights in the 1960s and escalating tensions in Vietnam, was enough for a campaign targeting the "silent majority". They encompass voters who felt left behind by the political elite and cultural shifts, issues particularly aligned with law and order, with an emphasis on patriotism. These working, middle class concerns prompted Nixon's efforts for office.

Similarly in Trumps 2016 campaign, Obama administrations economic performance after the Great Recession, anti-establishment themes, national identity, and economic nationalism, wasn't enough to keep conservative democrats voting blue. Nationalism is a political ideology centered around the belief that a group of people who share a common culture, language, history or territory should constitute an independent nation. A big example of nationalism was seen after the attacks of 9/11 in which George W. Bush invoked nationalism to unite Americans by emphasizing these key traits, and framed attacks as an assault on the American way of life. This forwarded America to be involved with the War on Terror and increase security measures to protect the nation.

Themes built around law and order in the Nixon campaign positioned the candidate who would restore order in time of social unrest, seeing it as a fundamental American value eroded. He sought to reclaim it to the people by being tough on crime and supporting law enforcement, that can be seen with Trump. Donald Trump's message to, "DRAIN THE SWAMP" referring to American politicians as "swamp creatures" (Myers *"draining the swamp" as a metaphor for control*). Promised renegotiated trade deals, curbing the illegal immigration, and issue that appealed to voters who believed that the elites are no longer serving the interests of the American people. This can be categorized as the theory of Prospective Voting, which occurs when voters choose candidates based on their promise for future polices rather than past performance, allowing Trumps campaign to gain huge prospective leverage for states that traditionally resulted in democratic votes.

"I'm here to drain the swamp of over-taxation, over-regulation and runaway inflation that has dangerously eroded our free way of life" (Regan, Ronald). Regan trailblazed his campaign on "Reganomics," which aimed to reduce taxes, cut government regulations, and promote free enterprise to revive the U.S. economy after a period of stagnation. While Trump did not adopt all the aspects of Regans economic vision, his emphasis on tax cuts for corporations and individuals, deregulation, was a modern ode to Regans policies. However, where Regan championed free trade and economic leadership, Trump criticized and sought to withdraw from international trade deals. (Even though he has ties to such international leaders). Trump continued to campaign to revitalize the American industry and bringing back jobs, being a protectionist, approached his potential working-class voters by re-negotiating trade deals that he believed harmed the U.S. working man.

Regan too was a proponent of law and order, his war on drugs began just after the extension of Nixon's tough on crime policies that helped solidify the republican party's position as the party of law and order for decades. Preserving traditional America led to a later modernized focus on the morality and conservative skewed values of the very ideology. Trumps emphasis on "America First" and "Make America Great Again" led to branded roots of populism. Capturing this nationalistic rhetoric led to the foundation of rallying individuals who would go to extreme lengths to get him into the office and put others in danger.

Nixon and Trump capitalized on a fear of societal collapse and rallied a core over base, framing themselves as protectors of stability and tradition. Again, resonating with a wishful Regan-era optimism, trumps promise to restore American greatness reflected on their ability to galvanize voters through strong nationalist appeals. These leaders found success by speaking to the disillusioned, tapping into fears of societal change, and offering economic renewal and security, which can be seen in relevant themes today.

While both Nixon and Regan are seen as pivotal figures in the republican party, looking at the wrongs of their decisions, to see if there's a parallel is crucial in the final statement of this brief history examination. It was Nixon's dishonesty and efforts to obstruct justice during his marred Watergate scandal of 1972 that led to his resignation.

For Regan, it can be his nasty conspiracies on the effects of his War on Drugs policies, sparking long term dope use in urban areas. But it was the Iran Contra Affairs of 1986, that officials who secretly facilitated the scale of arms to Iran and proceeded to fund Contra rebels in Nicaragua, claim to ignorance of Regan for not raising concerns about transparency or

accountability that his administration suffered. (*Understanding the Iran-Contra affairs - the Iran-Contra Affairs*).

Trumps, presidency saw multiple scandals, including issues that surrounded his administration response to investigations like Russian interference in the 2016 election, where allegations that the trump campaign had ties to Russian efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election. His impeachment (Ukraine Scandal), allegedly pressuring Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden and withholding military aid. Inciting the insurrection of the U.S. Capitol on January 6th. Refusing to release tax returns, suggested that he paid little to no federal income taxes in years. Family separation, faced criticism for zero tolerance immigration policy, leading to thousands of migrant children from their parents at the U.S. -Mexico border. And the handling of COVID-19 Pandemic, including downplaying tis severity, spreading misinformation, and the administration slow response drew criticism which prompted to his immediate downfall of the 2020 election to Biden by both parties.

Is this what America wants? According to OpenStax, the idea of retrospective voting is a theory where voters assess a candidate based on their past performance in office, particularly in relation to economic conditions and major policies. While Trump weaseled his way into politics, shocking considering his presidency in 2016. We saw those voters who favored candidates like Nixon and Regan, believe to relieve a new story, that Trump can change the republican party narrative. Now the Republican party and its candidates are not solely the only party responsible for the highlighted wrongs mentioned. These moments in history insinuate the fact that the individuals who swear allegiance vote for these individuals have no problem with the track record of their wrongs.

Now, going back to the question, what types of voting theories can be seen in the 2016 and 2020 elections? While assessing retrospective voting theory, where voters assess a candidate based on their past performance. We discussed how prospective voting worked in Trumps favor for the 2016 election, but in 2020, Joe Biden capitalized on his prospective voters by proposing a significant shift from Trumps leadership style and polices. He promised to unify the country, expand healthcare and tackle climate change amid a post pandemic recovery. This detailed economic plan, resonated with voters who were dissatisfied with the current situation, as well as how Trump undermine the pandemic all together. Issuing ventilators to countries like Russia, over his own (Torbati *Trump is donating ventilators to countries that don't need or can't use them*). This, among many strong appeals, is what led Biden's 2020 presidential win.

Realignment is another theory referring to major shifts in voter loyalty from one political party to another, often driven by changes in demographics or political issues. With the 2016 election, we saw realignment as traditional democratic voters, mainly working- white voters in the Midwest, shift towards Trump (Ruffini *The Unexpected Coalition that is remaking the Republican Party - Politico*). Dealignment, on the other hand, was seen in the 2020 election, where some voters distanced themselves form both major parties. Biden was significant to pulling disillusion voters back into the democratic fold, but the rise of the third-party candidates and growing discontent with the traditional two-party system remained a possibility. Bernie Sanders was a significant character in the political landscape. Having secured a significant number of votes in both the years 2016 and 2020 Democratic primaries as running as an Independent. Sanders mobilized a diverse and passionate base of supporters who were looking for an alternative to the established candidate choices. These dynamics pose the real possibility in the future of a candidate who encompasses the middle while being affiliated with a traditional

party. Though it wasn't enough to secure the score for executive office in both electoral cycles. Sanders remains as the senator of Vermont and the chair of the U.S. senate committee on health, education, and labor. (Gambino *Bernie Sanders, who reshaped US politics, ends 2020 Presidential Run*)

We, the American people, are now caught and faced with another concept, rational choice voting. Suggesting that individuals make the decision based on a calculated cost-benefit analysis, choosing the candidate who best serves their interests. Voters in 2016 believed that supporting rump would benefit them economically. While in 2020, suburban and urban voters shifted towards Biden, in leu of the cost and benefits of another four years of trump against new promises made for recovery and economic stability. This long term and policy driven agenda is what shifted key battleground state when it came to rational choice.

The 2024 election, all significant factors will once again be weighed on the ability of how we as individuals think and then translate that into our communities, issuing our voices not for subjective achievement, but an objective realization that we are amid great turmoil as a nation if we don't act. The 2024 presidential election between Kamala Harris and Donald trump, where voters have several decision-making strategies. It is difficult and unjust to wright about how key strategies can algin with certain voting prospects because that is a whole other essay per candidate. The best course of action is to thoroughly assess how each candidate's policies, visions for the future, and track records algin with their own values and priorities. Making an informed decision that best represents the direction they wish the country to take. Their respective websites state what they vouch for, most of their visions are indeed like wish lists for Christmas shopping, but the control and future of American democracy and the planet is at stake. (Gambino *Where do Harris and Trump stand on the key election issues?*)

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